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MVA FINAL VISUAL PRESENTATION

by

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A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF VISUAL ARTS

IN

PRINTMAKING

DEPARTMENT OF ART AND DESIGN

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

SPRING 1993



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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

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FINAL VISUAL PRESENTATION

submitted by ANNE-CLAUDE COTTY
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of
Visual Arts.

The University of Alberta

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YEAR THIS DEGREE WAS GRANTED 1993

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I hereby release the following works for incorporation into the University Collections, University of Alberta, as part of the Master of Visual Arts Thesis Collection:

<u>TITLE</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>MEDIUM</u>	<u>SIZE</u>
T. S. Eliot's Four Quartets	'92	Litho / Etching	15" x 11"
3 Poèmes de Francis Ponge	'92	(Book) "	11" x 10"
How to Sed Deer	'92	" "	8 1/2" x 11"

Anne-Claude Cotty

January 27 to February 7, 1993

This exhibition of
artists' books is
the final visual
presentation in
partial fulfillment of
the requirements
for the degree of
Master of Visual
Arts in Printmaking

GIVING
VOICE

Opening Reception
Thursday January 28,
7pm to 10 pm

TO THE

SILENT WORLD

Visual Metaphor in Photobased Prints



Design: Catherine Wilgus

Monday: 10 am to 5 pm
Closed Saturday, Monday
and statutory holidays

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GIVING VOICE TO THE SILENT WORLD:
VISUAL METAPHOR IN PHOTOBASED PRINTS

Let's begin with objects. I always begin there, with fragments of man-made artifacts of the natural world, collected in my pockets while walking outdoors. A scrap of steel; the inner lining of the bark of an aging tree. Not in the spirit of collecting, but as the result of a peculiar encounter not unlike two flints rubbing together to create a spark. A chance meeting fixed in the moment. An alliance in which vivid dramas unfold, the mind animating the object, the object animating the mind. Acute sensations are aroused, ideas are set into motion establishing a flow of experience between me and the silent world of found objects.

The macrolens on my camera affords me another way to connect with objects. I enjoy arranging them and taking their portraits, moved by their color and shape, intrigued by their transformation in assembled form. But the camera, at other times, has an uncanny way of submitting to accidents and reproducing objects which do not materially exist. These are crystalized by a play of light and subtle relief and, though they appear 3-dimensional and frozen in movement, they are merely shadows. These fictional objects, too, have eloquence and power.

In my printmaking, the camera becomes the first tool and photoprocesses become the initial stages in developing imagery able to expand from a physical reality to a complexity of realities beyond it. That is to say, as we consider an object and are moved by it, it begins to change us and in turn, begins to change. Our perception goes beyond physicality, beyond objecthood. We begin to travel into a world of reverie and imagination, memory and archetypal symbol and find that we are articulating the invisible.

We arrive in the world of metaphorical process arising from an "attentive silence which lies beneath the image" (Bachelard). We find in an image (or photograph) "the pressure of the unspeakable which wants to be spoken" (Barthes). From this quiet evolves a dynamic process. Metaphors behave like bold explorers, with intolerance for preconceptions and worn ideas, inventing new images out of common forms. They demand open readings (Eco) which "unfix" us (Bachelard) and invite continued exploration. This is a notion, I believe, as applicable to the multiple readings of written poetic texts as the prolonged contemplation of a poetic visual work. This is the underlying idea which has given life to this exhibition.

I selected three poets for this project who diverge greatly in formal characteristics but are linked by their "concentrated attention" on the physical world. Documenting a flow of experience in the moment--when they are writing--they offer a didactic poetry which seeks to instruct the reader and enlists an active, often strenuous, participation in their work. Philip Booth, a contemporary who lives on the coast of Maine, explains that an unexpected process evolved as he was writing How to See Deer: "I found myself finding, as I wrote, that the poem was looking into what I barely knew I was searching for, not deer but ways of being, ways of learning." (Maine Speaks) T.S. Eliot's Four Quartets (1935-1942) is of course a magnum opus of 20th century literature and travels great distances in time, space, emotion. His words move on various levels at

the same time, from topical to universal. Eliot's power lies in his attaching to tokens (commonplace objects) and images trouvailles (found images) layers of intense thought. Like shimmering ephemera, they escape definition and, as one literary critic puts it, the poet finds he must give himself up to unexplained but powerful images. (Bush) Taking the Side of Things (1942) took two decades for Francis Ponge to complete, the first publication in a long career. His prose poems became structures for a cosmogony and the creation of a new language as he focused on a series of small, ordinary objects. He gave voice to the physical world to divorce himself from an egocentric posture which places man at its center. Though my book has bilingual text, Ponge must be read in French to reveal his affection for the shapes of sounds and words, his play with puns and etymologies, etc. and ultimately the fact that the subject of his work is materialized language.

Instructed by objects, these are three poets intent on accessing vision in an ontological discourse, seeking signposts for where to place man in the world. They illustrate what Bachelard means by man realizing himself by reaching beyond himself. And as Joseph Campbell writes, by seeking new levels of awareness, "the symbolizing imagination enables man to lift himself up by the bootstraps."

My attempt has been to produce prints as parallel visual texts to these poems in a parallel phenomenological approach to frontiers of an invisible nature. There is no impulse here to illustrate poems, but a desire to signal similar avenues and difficulties of expression inside and outside of language. The creative process engenders its own roadblocks: artist and poet feel dispossessed of a voice and struggle with the inadequacies of their vehicle. Both, however, encounter a compelling need to try by sharpening their tools and their vision. Conducting verbal and visual relations in these handmade books, with texts and images side by side, I hope to create a propitious habitat for each that encourages dialogue and rereadings. Just as an exchange between two media can intensify a visual experience (when photoprocess joins with printmaking, for example), I think both poem and print should "gain substance in the interplay". This rapport involves process at various levels: initially, the visual apprehension of text and print (spatial and formal characteristics); then, seeing semantically the metaphor in the print and visualizing verbally the image in the poem. Added to this is the viewer's performance of the book, an experience which engages all the senses and reveals a synthesis of these processes. Tactile, rhythmic, sequential, books are natural devices for heightening our expectations as we turn their pages and are drawn into an intimate reading of the silent world.

Bachelard, Gaston. On Poetic Imagination and Reverie. Colette Gaudin, trans. New York: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1971

Barthes, Roland. Camera Lucida. New York: Hill and Wang, 1981

Bush, Ronald. T.S. Eliot: A Study in Character and Style. London: Oxford University Press, 1983

Campbell, Joseph. "The Interpretation of Symbolic Forms", The Binding of Proteus: Perspectives on Myth and the Literary Process. McCune, Orbison, Withim, eds. Lewisburg: Bucknell University, 1980.

Eco, Umberto. L'oeuvre ouverte (Opera Aperta). Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1965

Maine Writers and Publishers Alliance, eds. Maine Speaks/An Anthology of Maine Literature. Brunswick: 1989

SLIDE LIST

Please note that the slides read in columns from top to bottom, left to right

1. How to See Deer / Poem by Philip Booth (1992)
Lithography/etching ($8\frac{1}{4}$ x 11 x $5\frac{5}{8}$ ")
2. T. S. Eliot's Four Quartets (1992)
Lithography/etching ($15\frac{1}{2}$ x $11\frac{1}{4}$ x 3")
3. 3 Poemes de Francis Ponge (1992)
Excerpts from Taking the Side of Things
Etching/lithography ($10\frac{1}{2}$ x $11\frac{1}{2}$ x 1")
4. The Silent World is Our Only Homeland (1992)
From Taking the Side of Things by Francis Ponge
xerox/letterpress ($5\frac{1}{2}$ x $5\frac{1}{4}$ x 1")
5. Watching from Windows While Landscapes Unfold (1992)
collage: etchings/collographs in lab slide mailers (5 x $3\frac{1}{2}$ x $2\frac{1}{2}$ ")
6. Sylvania (1992)
Lithography/Oriental fold book ($3\frac{3}{4}$ x 5 x $1\frac{1}{4}$ ")
7. Sightations (1992)
Photoessay inspired by quotations of 5 artists on visual literacy
Lithography/3 variations in binding ($7\frac{1}{2}$ x $7\frac{1}{4}$ x 1")
8. Untitled (1992)
Etching and collograph/Oriental prayer book ($18\frac{1}{2}$ x $1\frac{3}{4}$ x $\frac{1}{2}$ ")
9. Untitled (1992)
Etching/mechanical book in four-sided case (20 x 20 x 1")
10. Petits Sortileges (1992)
Etching (3 of a series in 22 x 28" frame)
11. Bords de mer / Seashores (1992)
Poem by Francis Ponge
Installation piece: projected slides on muslin (50 x 75 ")
3 vies of 40-slide sequence

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